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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed families in Arkansas to obtain information on where parents acquire advice and information to assist with their childrearing efforts. The sample for the study were 23 parents of the University of Arkasas' nursery school children, 24 parents of first-grade children in a rural Arkansas county, and 18 parents located throughout Arkansas who have participated in an eight-state regional parenting research project. Sixty-nine of these 118 parents responded to a questionnaire (58 percent). The questionnaire assessed (1) parental use of 20 different sources of childrearing information and the perceived helpfulness of each source, (2) childrearing topics that would be most helpful in parenting efforts, and (3) family demographic data. Data analyses indicated that parents used a variety of sources for childrearing information. The five sources that received the highest percentage of use by parents were books, physicians, parents, friends, and magazines. The top five sources ranked as most helpful were classes and discussion groups, ministers, newsletters, mental health center, and physicians. Older parents used teachers, friends, books, and newspapers more than younger parents. Parents with more years of education used friends, books, classes and discussion groups, pamphlets, and physicians more than the parents with fewer years of education. Parents with fewer years of education used school counselors and ministers more than parents with more years of education. Fewer parents working outside the home used parents-in-law, magazines, and other sources; fewer homemakers used teachers as a source for childrearing information. The study concluded that these results could be used by parent educators in tapping into highly used resources and revamping sources that receive little use. (KC)

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INFORMATION SEEKING PATTERNS OF PARENTS RESIDING IN ARKANSAS

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An essential element of effective parent education is making available information that is relevant to the needs of the parent. Current research has been conducted on parental use of childrearing information sources such as the mass media, friends, relatives, and professionals (Clark-Stewart, 1978; Crase, Carlson, & Kontos, 1981; Geboy, 1981; Hughes & Durio, 1983; A. K. Mullis & R. L. Mullis, 1983; and Robinson, 1982). Family researchers realize the potential of such information sources to become effective parent education disseminators.

Where do parents residing in Arkansas seek childrearing information? How helpful do these parents perceive the information sources to be? The purpose of this study was to survey families in Arkansas to obtain information on where parents acquire advice and information to assist them with their childrearing efforts. Current research is lacking about the information seeking patterns of parents residing in Arkansas. The researchers believed that identification of parental sources and patterns of seeking information would benefit those that work with parents, especially parent education program planners.

The sample for this study were 23 parents of the University of Arkansas' nursery school children, 24 parents of first grade children in a rural Arkansas county, and 18 parents located throughout Arkansas that have participated in an eight state regional parenting research project. The questionnaires were either mailed or sent home via the children to 118 parents. Sixty-nine of the 118 parents responded, resulting in a 58 percent response rate.

The questionnaires consisted of three parts. The first part assessed parental utilization of 20 different sources for childrearing information

and the parents perceived helpfulness of each source that was utilized. The second part assessed childrearing topics that would be most helpful in parenting efforts. The third part assessed family demographic data.

Data analyses indicated that parents use a variety of sources for childrearing information. The five sources that received the highest percentage of utilization by the parents were: 1) books (94%), 2) physician (85%), 3) parents (85%), 4) friends (79%), and magazines (70%).

The top five sources that were ranked by the parents as the most helpful on a scale of 1 - 5 , with 1 being "not at all helpful" ranging to 5 being "very helpful", were: 1) classes and discussion groups, 2) minister, 3) newsletters, 4) mental health center, and 5) physician.

Analysis of age differences and parents utilization of information sources indicated four sources to be significant at the .05 level of significance. Means of the parents' age revealed older parents utilized teachers, friends, books, and newspapers more than the younger parents.

Analysis of educational differences and parental utilization of information sources indicated seven sources to be significant at the .05 level of significance. Means of the parents' education in years suggested that parents with more years of education utilized friends, books, classes and discussion groups, pamphlets, and physicians more than the parents with less years of education.

Analysis of educational difference demonstrated parents with less years of education utilized school counselors and ministers more than parents with more years of education.

Analysis of parents' occupational status, that is those that worked outside the home, compared to homemakers indicated four sources to be

significant at the .10 level of significance. Parents working outside the home had a lower percentage utilizing parents-in-law, magazines, and other (non-specified) sources. Whereas homemakers had a lower percentage utilizing teachers as a source for childrearing information.

Physicians, books and relatives may be considered to be the most utilized and helpful source for childrearing information. Sources that were highly utilized but not ranked as helpful were magazines, friends, and the television. Sources that were ranked as helpful but not highly utilized were classes and discussion groups, ministers, newsletters, and mental health centers. The radio, cooperative extension service and the school guidance counselor were not highly utilized nor ranked as being helpful.

These data results present a challenge to parent educators. They must find the most effective means to disseminate parenting information taking into consideration the needs and convenience of the parent. This may involve tapping into highly utilized sources and revamping professional sources that receive low utilization.

Table 1

Parents' Utilization and Helpfulness Rankings for Sources of Childrearing Information

Sources	Percent Using	Helpfulness Rankings of Sources
Physician	85*	5**
School Counselor	10	14
Teachers	53	11
Minister	24	2**
Cooperative Extension	4	20
Parents	85*	9
Parents-in-law	64	10
Relative	58	7
Friend	79*	13
Babysitter	21	15
Television	48	19
Books	94*	6
Classes & Discussion	25	1**
Magazines	70*	16
Newsletters	21	3**
Newspapers	37	17
Pamphlets	40	12
Radio	10	18
Mental Health Center	4	4**
Others	13	8

* The highest 5 percent
** The top 5 rankings

Table 2

Analysis of Age Differences in Parental Utilization of Childrearing Information Sources

Source	Means		Statistics
	No	Yes	Probability
Physician	27.67	30.96	.10
School Counselor	30.63	30.50	.93
Teacher	28.42	32.21	.001*
Minister	30.86	29.93	.50
Cooperative Extension	30.51	33.50	.28
Parents	32.00	30.42	.36
Parents-in-law	30.29	30.81	.66
Relatives	29.70	31.11	.23
Friends	28.55	31.11	.04*
Babysitters	30.78	29.91	.56
T.V.	30.52	30.70	.88
Books	25.75	30.98	.03*
Classes & Discussion	30.29	31.53	.32
Magazines	29.31	31.12	.13
Newsletters	30.29	31.83	.18
Newspapers	29.53	32.21	.03*
Pamphlets	30.72	30.48	.84
Radio	30.67	30.00	.81
Mental Health Center	30.60	31.00	.94
Other	30.62	30.60	.99

*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Ages range from 22 years to 43 years

Table 3

Analysis of Educational Differences in Parental Utilization of Childrearing Information Sources

Source	Means		Statistics
	No	Yes	Probability
Physician	12.14	14.13	.04*
School Counselor	14.17	11.50	.008*
Teacher	13.69	14.06	.62
Minister	14.45	12.26	.003*
Cooperative Extension	13.82	15.33	.33
Parents	14.43	13.82	.72
Parents-in-law	13.81	13.95	.87
Relatives	14.23	13.70	.49
Friends	11.91	14.35	.007*
Babysitters	14.04	13.27	.39
T.V.	13.57	14.19	.40
Books	11.25	14.09	.002*
Classes & Discussion	13.21	15.75	.002*
Magazines	12.94	14.26	.11
Newsletters	13.53	15.07	.07
Newspapers	13.34	14.71	.08
Pamphlets	12.94	15.12	.002*
Radio	14.15	11.20	.09
Mental Health Center	13.91	13.67	.91
Other	13.80	14.40	.46

*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Years of education range from 8 to 20

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